

CAR PARK MANAGEMENT

POLICY SCREENING

1. Background

At its meeting on 9 May 2003 University Council considered proposals on Car Park Management.

In common with other large organisations traffic management and car parking in particular have become a significant problem at all of the University's campuses.

It has become obvious that the present system needs to be regulated and that the amount of available spaces has been overwhelmed by the pace of the University's growth and development. The significant increase in the number of cars used by students and the impact on available spaces is also a factor.

Pressure on available spaces has led to cars being parked in places that are inconvenient to others and in many cases dangerous. The University introduced car clamping to address this issue.

To address the issue of excess demand the University considered a number of options and decided on a policy of Car Park Management which involved charging for use of the car parks. The details of this policy are set out in the paper considered by council on 9 May 2003. Council is due to give final approval of the Policy at its meeting on 20 June 2003.

The University is aware of its responsibilities under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and in particular the requirement to conduct a screening exercise on all new policies. This paper is intended to document the screening exercise on the Car Park Management Policy.

2. Responsibilities in regard to the screening of new policies

The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that have a significant impact on the provision of equality of opportunity and should be subjected to full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

As part of the screening exercise the following issues must be considered:

- Is there evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups covered under the Act?

- Is there evidence that the different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy?
- Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that particular policies create problems which are specific to them?
- Is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or community relations by altering the Policy, or by working with others, in Government or in the larger community in the context of the Policy?

3. Screening Process

The Car Park Management Policy was developed by the University Working Party on Transportation Management (UWPTM). This Group reported to the University's Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG) which in turn reported to Council.

Both prior to and after the Council meeting on 9 May 2003 SPWG discussed issues in regard to screening and this was communicated to the working party.

On 2 June 2003 the working party met to formally conduct and document the screening process.

The working party considered the four main questions set out above and the impact on the nine categories specified in section 75. After due consideration the working party decided that for three of the nine categories; persons with a disability, persons with dependant and gender, there may be particular issues.

3.1 Persons with a disability

For employees and students with a mobility related disability the use of public transport may present particular difficulties and some may consider that they have no option but to take their own car to the University.

In order to mitigate the impact of this the working party agreed that it should continue to reserve a number of parking spaces for staff, students and visitors with mobility related disabilities. Access to these spaces will be limited to people who qualify for the 'blue permits' issued by the Road Service. The University's 'black roundells' will no longer be valid following the introduction of the Policy. Cars parked in reserved space, which are not displaying a 'blue permit', will be subject to clamping.

The working party was made aware that other institutions which had introduced charging generally do not charge staff and students with mobility related disabilities.

The University has a strategy to promoting equality of opportunity and widen access for persons with a disability. As part of this strategy it has decided to waive car parking charges for students and staff with mobility related disabilities.

The working party also considered the issue of other visitors with mobility related disabilities. It was agreed that such visitors who qualify for the 'blue permit' could use the reserved spaces. The host who invites these visitors may decide to cover the parking charges.

3.2 Persons with dependant

The working party considered the impact on parents who decide to leave their children to school before coming to the University and therefore start later than other staff. It was agreed that the new policy would help these individual as the envisaged reduction in demand for spaces would mean that they would be more likely to get a space than they would under the current arrangements.

The working party was also aware that the University has a suite of 'family friendly' policies to help enable staff to balance work commitments with family responsibilities.

3.3 Gender

There are a number of Departments or parts of Departments in the University which are predominantly male or predominantly female e.g. Security staff are predominantly male and cleaning staff predominantly female. The working party considered if the new car parking arrangements would adversely impact on one of these groups of staff. It considered whether the introduction of charges would impact more on staff such as cleaners who have a lower wage than some other staff and are therefore less able to pay the charges.

One policy option open to the University is to charge everyone at the same rate. The working party however did not take this option; instead it intends to introduce a tiered system of charging related to ability to pay. The impact on lower paid staff will therefore be mitigated.

The working party also considered the potential for adverse impact on females working and studying at night. This group may feel vulnerable using public transport during the hour of darkness. The working group considered that the policy addresses this in that there will be an increased security presence and CCTV coverage.

A copy of the screening proforma is attached as appendix one.

4. Conclusions

The working party reached the conclusion that while different groups specified in section 75 have different issues in regard to the Car Park Management Policy sufficient mitigation has been built in to address these issues. It therefore concluded that an Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary.

The University intends to consult once each year on the outcome of screening exercises on new policies developed during the preceding twelve months. The outcome of the screening exercise on the Car Park Management Policy will be included in the next annual consultation exercise.

The outcome of the screening will be reviewed in one years time.

